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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of a program with three basic features--high interest plays, oral reading, and high readability level--designed to aid middle school students scoring two or more years below grade level in reading comprehension. Subjects, 13 boys and two girls enrolled in a basic English class in a suburban middle school located in a southern coastal town in Florida, read aloud and discussed plays from "Read" magazine and participated in group dramatic activities based on the plays over a 10-week period. Results from posttest reading comprehension tests indicated that the program is an effective method for improving the comprehension skills of middle school students reading below grade level. (Thirty-six references and appendixes of data, evaluation instruments, and discussion questions are attached.) (RS)

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IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF BASIC STUDENTS
BY ORALLY READING HIGH LEVEL MATERIAL

by
CAROL S. BLACHARSKI

A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education
of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science.

May 1985

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Abstract

Improving Reading Comprehension of Basic Students by Orally Reading High Level Materials

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Descriptors: Secondary Education, Junior High Schools, Middle Schools,
Junior High School Students, Reading Comprehension, Reading Skills,
Reading Improvement, Remedial Reading, Reading Aloud to Others, Oral
Reading, Oral Communication Method, Oral Interpretation, Creative Dramatics,
Remedial Instruction, Remedial Programs.

The author developed and implemented a program to aid the middle school
student scoring two or more years below grade level in reading compre-
hension. The program's aims were to help the student improve both
literal and inferential comprehension skills in reading.

The program contained three basic components: high interest plays, oral
reading, and high readability level. After pretesting, the students
read ten high interest plays on a 7.0 readability level. Each play
was discussed, creative dramatic activities were introduced to reinforce
comprehension, and specific reading skills were tested at the conclusion
of six of the plays. The group interaction forced concentration and
provided motivation. The students were posttested at the conclusion of
the program, and the results indicated that the program is an effective
method for improving comprehension skills of middle school students reading
below grade level. (Appendices include testing results and examples of
discussion questions and tests.)

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I. Purpose

This parcticum was implemented at a suburban middle school located west of a southern, coastal town in Florida. To achieve racial balance in this school of predominately Caucasian, middle-class students, black students were bussed to the school from an inner-city, depressed neighborhood and from western, farming areas.

The middle school had a professional staff consisting of a principal, assistant principal, assistant principal for curriculum, six assistant principals for student services, eighty-two teachers, and two media specialists.

English, math, social studies, and science teachers were assigned to teams. Students were then placed on one team so that the four teachers had the same students and could work together in assessing the needs and abilities of each student. This team planning was designed to help the teachers develop effective, individualized, teaching strategies.

The school also employed people in clerical, maintenance, and food service positions which did not require teaching certificates.

The school housed approximately 1700 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The curricular scheduling for the school was organized around a seven period day. Each class period was forty-nine minutes in length. The students were tracked into academic classes by achievement test scores and teacher recommendation.

The achievement test used by the school to determine placement was the Stanford Achievement Test, Level 2 (1972). The Stanford Achievement Test used stanine scores from one to nine to denote achievement.

Students who scored one stanine two or below were placed in compensatory classes. Students with stanine scores averaging three to four were tracked into basic classes. Students with average stanine scores of five and six were placed in average classes. Advanced classes were reserved for those students achieving above grade level with stanines which averaged seven, eight, and nine.

However, the academic teachers maintained the option of placing a student in a class outside his tested achievement level based on their knowledge of the student's needs and an evaluation of his classroom performance.

Parents were also allowed to request placement in an academic class at either a higher or lower level than the level of the student's tested achievement.

A large Special Education Department served students with special needs. Classes included specific learning disabilities, hearing impaired, educable mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and gifted. Students in the emotionally disturbed classes were tracked in to the regular academic English classes on a limited basis. The other students in special education classes received their academic instruction in English in the special class.

The seventh grade this year consisted of approximately six hundred students. Of these, only forty students had been placed in compensatory or basic English. The majority of the students were in average English classes. Seventy-five students were taking advanced English.

The group the writer selected for this practicum was a seventh

grade basic class consisting of thirteen boys and two girls. The class could also be described by racial groups. There were three black students, two Spanish students, and the remainder of the students were Caucasian. Of the fifteen students in the class, seven had failed one grade, four had failed two grades, and two had failed three grades to date. The students were tracked into the class based on spring 1984 Stanford Achievement Test, Level 2 (1972) scores in the Reading Comprehension and Total Language categories. Students in the basic class scored between a range of two to four stanines (See Appendix A for a list of stanine scores). Teachers' recommendations were also considered in the placement of these students in basic classes. The team, in a meeting, discussed test scores, class performance, and the emotional or behavioral traits of these students, which, they felt, would determine the success of a student in the academic setting.

Additionally, only one of the fifteen students was in a special education class. That student was in a class for the emotionally disturbed for five periods a day. One student was in a truancy prevention program, and three students had been adjudicated delinquent and were being supervised by a community control counselor through HRS.

The political factor that most directly affected the problem this paper addresses was that the state had mandated that specific minimal competency skills must be met in order to be promoted to grade nine. The State Student Assessment Test (SSAT), Diagnostic Communications Test, a county produced instrument, administered to the target group in October 1984, indicated clearly that none of these students was proficient in the specific skills they must have mastered to be promoted to grade

nine. (See Appendix B for a list of students' SSAT-Diagnostic results). Therefore, development of these specific skills must occur before SSAT testing in October, 1985, or the students in the target group will not be promoted at the end of eighth grade (See Appendix C for county guidelines for promotion to grade nine).

Retention in eighth grade until all standards were met was of concern because the students would be falling behind their classmates. This would result in frustration, and the students might eventually drop out of school.

The writer of the practicum has been an English teacher in the school for thirteen years. The writer's teaching assignment for the past ten years has been three levels of seventh grade English: one basic class, four average classes, and one advanced class. The average number of students taught in a year has been 180.

In addition to regular teaching duties, the writer has also functioned at the chairperson of the English Department for the past eight years. She has also served as a curriculum writer for the county school system, and she helped develop the functional literacy test for tenth grade on the state level. The writer also wrote guidelines for physical plant development of Florida's middle schools.

The problem was that the students in the target population read at a comprehension level two or more grades below the expected seventh grade level. This comprehension deficiency may result in failure on the State Student Assessment Test (SSAT), and the students who fail to meet the standards on the State Student Assessment Test can not be promoted to

grade nine. Therefore, the students may drop out of school without successfully completing eighth grade.

"Comprehension," for the purposes of this practicum, was defined as "the reader's recalling what he has read and relating it to real or vicarious experiences, identical or similar to those expressed in print" (Wilson and Hall, 1972, p. 9). The comprehension problem was documented by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form A, Brown Level (See Appendix D) administered as a pretest.

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) was specifically chosen as the evaluation instrument for pretesting on the recommendation Ms. Carol Churchill, the county's North Area Reading Specialist. Ms. Churchill stated in an interview that, "The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) is the one test that tests both literal and inferential comprehension and can be administered in a total class situation" (Churchill, 2-85).

"The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test was designed to provide particularly accurate assessment of low-achieving pupils," according to Byron Roekel who reviewed the test for The Eighth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Buros, 1978, p. 1298) and therefore was considered both a reliable and valid indicator of the comprehension levels of the students in the target group.

The writer contended that the primary cause of the poor reading comprehension skills among the targeted students was that these students experienced difficulty developing reading comprehension skills in the primary grades. The solution strategy mandated in this county for students

failing to pass mastery tests at each level of the basal reading series, Ginn 720, Xerox Education Company, was to remediate the students using the Ginn Skillpak workbook at the prescribed level and then to retest. When students failed the **retest**, they were assigned to reread the same basal reader and rework the same activity workbooks that had previously proven unsuccessful. This sequence of activity, with no other interventions, except failure of a grade, was continued until seventh grade.

The reasons why this teaching strategy was not effective with these students might also be explained by their backgrounds. First, there was an apparant lack of parental support. Evidence of this is that the writer has met only one parent, yet she had taught three of the students for two consecutive years. A personal survey interests **and** experiences completed by the students on September 1, 1984, also indicated that they had not had a culturally rich environment (See Appendix E for survey form). Eleven of the students were living in broken homes. They spent much of their time at home alone. Often they had to care for younger siblings. **Lack** of money was a **problem** in these homes. The students' primary source of entertainment was television. Very few of the students had been on vacations, but most of the students had lived in different parts of the country. The only special activities these students had had instruction in was music, and that instruction was at the school. One of the students lived with a sister because both parents died within the past two years.

Another cause of the low reading comprehension scores of the two Spanish students was that both **spoke** only Spanish at home and still mentally translated from Spanish to English at school.

The practicum was designed to achieve three major objectives:

Major Objective One:

Over a period of ten weeks, the individual students in the target group would improve their literal comprehension by at least four months as measured by the difference between grade-level equivalent scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. (Form A on pretest, Form B on posttest) to be administered before and after the implementation of the practicum.

Major Objective Two:

Over a period of ten weeks, the individual students in the target group would improve their inferential reading comprehension levels by at least four months as measured by the difference between grade-level equivalent scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Form A on pretest, Form B on posttest) to be administered before and after the implementation of the practicum.

Major Objective Three:

Each student in the target group would pass the classroom tests on specific literal and inferential comprehension questions based on the content of specific plays given at the conclusion of each tested play with a minimum score of 70%.

2. Research

To generate as much information as possible about effective strategies and programs for improving the reading comprehension levels of middle school students testing two or more years below grade level on reading comprehension tests, the writer of this practicum requested two simultaneous computer searches using the ERIC database. One search was requested through Nova University's Information Retrieval Service, and the other search was ordered through the school system's professional library. The two searches each produced some unduplicated research. In addition, current professional reading textbooks were perused to gather information on accepted, widely disseminated strategies for improving reading comprehension.

The fact that poor reading comprehension skills is a serious problem throughout America has been thoroughly researched. A synthesis of the state of the American educational system and its need to improve the quality of reading instruction in America's schools has documented that "about 13 percent of all 17-year olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent" (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1981, p.12).

This study also documented that national achievement test scores in all content areas have been declining during recent years.

The NCEE (1981) also characterized the institution of learning that set excellence as a goal as one that "sets high expectations and goals for all learners..." (p.13). It further encouraged English teachers to teach

students to "comprehend, interpret, evaluate and use what they read" (p. 14). A final recommendation of the NCEE was to up-grade textbooks to include more rigorous content. They further stated that particular emphasis must be placed on developing materials and programs for the remedial or disadvantaged student (NCEE, 1981).

A review of the textbooks dealing with teaching reading skills verified that the strategy of using a basal reading series, such as the writer's school system advocates, is in wide use and is a generally accepted method of instruction for remediation. Bond and Tinker (1973) cite use of basal readers as one of the modern approaches to remedial instruction.

Frederickson (1982) notes that large numbers of students are entering high school without adequate reading comprehension skills. He asserts that the common practice of attempting to remediate these skill deficiencies by using routine reading drills, another common strategy, is not effective.

Educators interested in improving the reading comprehension skills of their students have consistently searched for alternative means of increasing reading skills. There are three common threads that occur over and over in the literature. The first is that the remedial program, to be effective, must be creative. The second is that the remedial program must actively involve the student as a participant. A third feature of a successful program of remediation is that it must include oral work as a vital component of the program.

The writer of the practicum then investigated several strategies

based on the three components necessary for a successful remediation program. The strategies of using games (Whitehead, 1968) or computers (Frederickson, 1982) were rejected due to lack of availability of materials and the prohibitive cost of purchasing the quantity of material necessary to structure a quality program. The strategy of using arts and crafts (Whitehead, 1968) was rejected because of the writer's lack of artistic talent.

The writer then concentrated her search of the literature on effective strategies using oral reading as the crucial component. The writer of the practicum found that there is an abundance of strategies documented in the literature that feature some type of oral work.

The importance of oral language as a vital component in successful remediation was documented by the Task Force on Teaching English to the Disadvantaged commissioned by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 1980). This task force stated that "rigidly structured reading programs, without oral experiences using new vocabulary and sentence patterns, seem unlikely to achieve lasting growth" (p.12).

Oral language, as described in the literature, encompasses various forms. The most commonly documented is the technique of reading aloud to students. From that beginning, the students are involved in a variety of dramatic activities, written exercises, and artistic endeavors. A frequently mentioned exercise is to use creative dramatics to help the student internalize elements of the selection before hearing the selection. Another successful strategy is to have the students role-play the events by becoming the character. Creative dramatic activities can also be

used to help the students develop alternative endings for the selection or to develop new situations using different media to predict or project possible solutions.

While these strategies do add life and meaning to literature, the writer of the practicum remained concerned that the student would not develop reading comprehension skills by listening to literature read aloud. To read well a person must first read, not listen.

Therefore, the writer searched the literature for oral reading techniques that depended on the student, not the teacher, as the oral reader.

Stallings (1984) documented the benefits of oral reading by the student. This study concludes that "teacher reinforcement of correct responses and guidance for incorrect responses were positively related to reading achievement gains, and the frequency of reading-related verbal interactions, including interactive instruction and oral reading, positively related to achievement"(p. 38).

Other studies indicate that there is a positive correlation between oral reading and improvement of reading comprehension. Negin and Rios (1982) concluded that that "oral reading should be encouraged as a possible means of improving the comprehension of disabled secondary school students" (p.9).

Oral interpretation of literature is another, related strategy which further involves the student in understanding, internalizing, and interpreting the selection through the use of voice. Taylor (1980) summarizes the value of oral interpretation as culled from information found

in ERIC/RCS and reported in the Journal of Reading (1980). Of particular significance is the section of the article devoted to the demonstrated benefits to students of employing oral interpretation techniques in the classroom.

Oral interpretation has been found to increase the students' appreciation and understanding of literature, as well as their motivation to improve their reading skills....The self--confidence of disabled readers is enhanced when they master the reading of dialogue in plays interpreted orally.(p. 365).

In reviewing the literature, the writer also found substantial evidence that drama as a genre afforded the most potential for developing comprehension skills in remedial readers.

Moffett (1983) suggests that "drama is the most accessible form of literature for young and uneducated people" (p.63).

A final, compelling factor for using drama is that, because of its organization and format, it is easier for the skills deficient middle school student to comprehend. The National Institute of Education in Washington D.C. sponsored a study in October 1982 which clearly indicated that orally reading a play can improve reading comprehension at more advanced comprehension levels (Snow, 1982).

After analyzing the various strategies presented in the literature review, the writer of the practicum concluded that the strategy of having the students orally read high readability plays provided the best potential solution for improving the reading comprehension skills of the target group.

The writer of the practicum determined that Read magazine (Weekly Reader Publications) offered the best potential for attainment of the writer's goals of increasing both literal and inferential comprehension levels of the students in the target group. Read magazine publishes high interest plays combined with a seventh grade readability level in a format that seventh grade students enjoy. The students in the target group would orally read the plays and participate in creative dramatic activities based on the literature being studied.

This particular strategy was chosen because it deviated completely from the teaching techniques and types of materials previously used in the class. The target group had been exposed primarily to county developed basic skills sheets, written on a fifth grade level and designed to address the minimal competency skills tested on the State Student Assessment Test. The students had spent months "filling in the blanks." The only literature the target group had been exposed to was the state and county adopted textbook, Scope Reading Anthology, Level II, published by Scholastic Scope. This anthology has a readability level of 4.5 to 6.0. However, the students had not been motivated by the stories. This was demonstrated by the fact that in an oral reading activity nobody could ever "pick up where the last person stopped."

The only other county adopted reading materials for the target group were the basal reading series materials published by Ginn or the basal readers published by Rand-McNally. If the writer attempted to use either basal series in the classroom, the students, teenagers, would be reading stories about, and looking at pictures of much younger children.

The material of choice, Read magazine, was already in use in the school in average and advanced English classes. It had not, however, been used in a basic class in the thirteen years the writer had taught at the school because of the readability level of 7.0. Because Read was currently available, there were many advantages to using Read. The first was that there was no additional cost for implementing the solution strategy. The second was that the students in the basic class frequently heard good things about Read from their friends in average and advanced classes and had expressed interest in reading Read, too. The third reason for selecting Read magazine was that it includes a teacher's manual, tests, and suggested exercises with each issue. A fourth consideration in the selection of Read magazine as the material of choice was that every issue contains a play with many parts. Every student would be required to have a part in each play, and every student would need to know exactly where the class was in the story at all times. This format would force concentration, increase time spent on task, and it should help the student to improve his literal and inferential comprehension of the selection. The 7.0 readability level was the final reason for selecting Read magazine. The writer contends that the more difficult readability level would prove both an incentive and a challenge to the students in the target group. The writer would constantly provide positive reinforcement for their efforts through verbal encouragement.

Under the circumstances, this method of orally reading plays was the strategy of choice because it actively involves each student. Each student becomes an integral and necessary part of the class as his character

interacts with other characters and moves the action of the play to its conclusion. Thus, the student finds a need to read and comprehend what he is reading to provide his character's personality and emotion through oral interpretation.

The writer of the practicum had several interventions to implement for the solution to be successful. The most important aspect of this task was to provide enthusiasm and encouragement. The next was to provide immediate feedback regarding the quality and accuracy of the reading. This feedback had to be presented in a positive manner to avoid discouragement. The third aspect of the writer's responsibility was to maintain the illusion of a fun activity while actively teaching and evaluating reading comprehension skills.

Other strategies had not worked with the students in the target group, as the research suggests, because they were individualized and isolated instead of being vital and group-dependent. Theoretically, this method should encourage the student to accept his place in the society of the classroom and work toward the common good while improving his own reading comprehension skills.

3. Method

This project was implemented at the school level without obtaining any clearances. In the county in which the writer teaches county mandated objectives must be covered. However, methods of instruction and material selection are left to the discretion of the teacher.

The major activities involved in this practicum were reading and dramatizing plays from Read magazine. To provide examples of discussion questions and sample tests on each play, the author obtained permission from Read magazine (See Appendices F, G, H, I for actual correspondence with editors of Read magazine).

The first step in the implementation of this project was the administration of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form A, Brown Level (grades 4.5-9.5). This instrument, currently available in the school, was used as a pretest to measure the students' reading comprehension on literal and inferential levels.

Additional materials needed to implement the solution strategy were Read magazines, published bi-monthly by Weekly Reader Publications.

The writer selected plays that, based on her previous teaching experience, were of high interest to students. The writer also decided to include plays that had been adapted from various genre of literature to expose the students in the target group to a breadth and scope of literary themes and techniques as well as some background in the classics. Plays adapted from classics included "The Monkey's Paw" by W. W. Jacobs,

"Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, and "The Ugly Little Boy" by Issac Asimov. Plays adapted from popular adolescent novels included "I Am the Cheese" by Robert Cormier and "The Outsiders" by S. E. Hinton. The remainder of the plays were timely. They either dealt with problems adolescents face or were humorous.

Each student was assigned at least one part in each play. The better readers, or those who volunteered, had two or more parts when the play had more characters than there were students in the target group. The writer frequently accepted character parts in plays to role-model oral interpretation techniques. Frequently, students participated in creative dramatic activities either before or after reading the play to enhance their comprehension of the literature. A teacher-led discussion followed each reading. Following 60% of the plays, a short, ten question, comprehension test based on the play was administered. The content tests tested specific comprehension skills such as main idea and details, sequence of events, conflict, and making inferences.

The discussion questions and tests were culled from the appropriate teacher's editions and text of Read magazine or were teacher produced and based on the comprehension model reported by Lanier and Davis (1972). (See Appendix J for comprehension model). (See Appendices K through AA for actual discussion questions and tests). The writer chose not to test after each play to maintain the enthusiasm of the students for the activity.

Each student in the target group read at least one play

each week for a ten week period.

The implementation plan called for one day for pretesting, ten weeks of reading, dramatizing, discussing, and being tested on literal and inferential comprehension, and one day for posttesting.

The posttest was the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form B, Brown Level (grades 4.5-9.5). This instrument, currently available in the school, was used to measure the students' reading comprehension on literal and inferential levels following implementation of the intervention strategy addressed in this paper.

The following detailed analysis of the sequence of activities was segmented by weeks in accordance with the structure of the implementation plan designed by the writer. This strategy focused on each play as a separate unit. All the activities, discussion, and test questions were based on individual plays and were completed during a single week's time.

During the first week of the implementation of the strategy, the writer administered the pretest, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form A, Brown Level, to the students in the target population. This test was completed in one day. On the second day of the first week the students read "One Too Many." The play was completed on the third day, and the writer led the students in a discussion of the play (See Appendix K for discussion questions for "One Too Many"). The students were tested on their comprehension of supporting details (See Appendix L for test on supporting details on "One Too Many") and their understanding of main idea and irony as presented in the play (See Appendix M for test on main idea and irony from Read magazine on "One Too Many") on the fourth

of the first week.

"The Outsiders" was read on the first and second day of the second week of implementation. The third day of the second week was devoted to a teacher-led discussion of the play (See Appendix N for discussion questions on "The Outsiders"). The students were tested on their knowledge of the main idea and supporting details in the play (See Appendix O for Read test on main idea and supporting details based on "The Outsiders") on the fourth day. They also spent time discussing the cliques at the students' school in comparison to the cliques presented in the play.

"Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind" was read on the first and second day of week three. The students discussed the play on the third day (See Appendix P for discussion questions on "Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind").

Three days were spent during the third week on "I Am The Cheese." The writer: used the Directed Reading Thinking Activity suggested by Read (See Appendix Q for Read's Directed Reading Thinking Activity for "I Am the Cheese") during the reading of the play to help the students in the target group understand the inferences. This process took two days. A third day was spend discussing the content of the play. A test on sequence of events (See Appendix R for Read's test on "I Am the Cheese") was administered at the end of the third day.

The fourth week was devoted to "The Monkey's Paw." The play itself was read on the first day. The discussion of the play took place on the second day (See Appendix S for discussion questions for "The Monkey's Paw"). The students participated in a creative dramatic

activity for their remaining three days where they brainstormed ideas for skits on how wishes go wrong and produced these skits for each other.

"The Ugly Little Boy" was read on the first and second day of the sixth week. After the play was finished on the second day, the play was discussed (See Appendix T for discussion questions for "The Ugly Little Boy"). The students' understandings of theme and conflict and their reading comprehension of the selection (See Appendix U for Read test on theme and conflict and reading comprehension for "The Ugly Little Boy") were tested on the third day of the sixth week. The concluding activity for this play was to work in groups to think of things or people to bring back. The students then wrote short plays telling what happened to these things or people they brought to the future. This activity took the remaining time in the sixth week to complete.

"I'll Just Die" was the play the students read during the seventh week of the implementation period. The play was read on the first day of the week. The writer led the students in discussing the play (See Appendix V for discussion questions for "I'll Just Die") on the second day. The test (See Appendix W for Read test on making inferences and main idea for "I'll Just Die") for "I'll Just Die" was administered on the third day of the seventh week.

"Harrison Bergeron" was read on the first and second day of the eighth week. Half of the second day and part of the third day were spent discussing the play (See Appendix X for Read's discussion questions for "Harrison Bergeron").

"The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid" was read on the first and second day of the ninth week. The play was discussed (See Appendix Y for Read's discussion questions for "The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid" on the second day after the completion of the play. A test on supporting details and main ideas (See Appendix Z for Read's test on supporting details and main ideas) was administered to the students in the target population on the third day of the ninth week..

"Just A Little Joke" was read on the first day of the tenth week. The teacher-led discussion (See Appendix AA for Read's discussion questions for "Just A Little Joke") took place on the second day. The third day of the tenth week was spent on the administration of the posttest, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form B, Brown Level, to the students in the target population.

The only problem that the writer of the practicum experienced during the implementation of the practicum was that some of the students in the target population were absent or suspended from school during part of the implementation period (See Appendix BB for list of students' days absent or suspended). As a result, some of the students were not able to participate in all ten plays, and the writer was not able to monitor the progress of those students who were out of school on a bi-weekly basis.

4. Results:

The practicum was designed to achieve three major objectives. These objectives, with specific exceptions, were achieved.

1. Over a period of ten weeks, the individual students in the target group improved their literal comprehension by at least four months as measured by the difference between grade-level equivalent scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Form A on pretest, Form B on posttest) which was administered before and after the implementation of the practicum. All but one student met the requirement. (See Appendix CC for posttest results).

2. Over a period of ten weeks, the individual students in the target group improved their inferential comprehension by at least four months as measured by the difference between grade-level equivalent scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Form A on pretest, Form B on posttest) which was administered before and after the implementation of the practicum. All of the students in the target group met the requirement (See Appendix CC for posttest results).

3. Each student in the target group passed the classroom tests on specific literal and inferential comprehension questions based on the content of specific plays given at the conclusion of each tested play with a minimum score of 70% except for one student who scored 60% on one test (See Appendix DD for specific test results).

Several of the students in the target population demonstrated literal and inferential comprehension level increases significantly greater than could be expected during the implementation period

(See Appendix EE for list of amount of individual increase in literal and inferential comprehension skills based on analysis of pretest and posttest results). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the positive side effects of implementation of the solution strategy that, the writer contends, resulted in the demonstrated increase in comprehension skills.

The Read plays were enthusiastically received by the students in the target population. They continually asked to read more plays. The verbal encouragement the writer provided introduced and reinforced the idea that the students were doing well using the higher level material. Therefore, when the students were given the posttest, they were eager to demonstrate that they had increased their literal and inferential comprehension skills. The writer observed that the students in the target population focused their attention on the posttest and seriously worked to achieve a good result. The writer contends that the posttest results are an accurate assessment of the students' comprehension levels. The attitude of the students toward the class and toward the test resulted in a much better score than previously obtained.

The third objective, achieving a score of 70% on each test on the individual plays, has many missing scores. The writer contends that the strength of the solution strategy, orally reading high level plays, was also the greatest weakness of the program because students who were absent or suspended on the days the plays were read and discussed could not be tested.

One student failed to meet the objectives of the practicum. This student was present every day and participated in all the activities. The solution strategy was not appropriate for this student because it

failed to emphasize the importance of slow, accurate reflection on the details of the selections and allowed this student to continue to continue to mindlessly rush through his assignments. The writer contends, based on her observations of this student, that an additional component should have been built in to the solution strategy to mandate achievement of the tested skill before progression to the next play. However, the writer's concern was to determine how well the students could function using higher level materials . It was not to see how well the students could function using higher level materials after remediation for failure to understand those materials.

A positive side effect that the program was not set up to measure was the effect the program would have on attitude, motivation, self concept, and class behavior. As has been noted, several of the students in the target group were suspended during the program because of behavioral problems. However, there were no problems with classroom discipline in the writer's class. Every student was well behaved and cooperative during the implementation period.

5. Recommendations

The writer of the practicum feels that the number of students in the target population was too small, and the implementation period too short, to draw accurate conclusions as to the potential this program has for improving the reading comprehension skills of the middle school student reading two or more years below grade level. However, the success of this initial field trial persuades the writer that future research studies, involving teachers and students in other school settings using this method, should be conducted.

The writer also contends that further research into this method of instruction should be designed to include data on the ability of this method to motivate students to read, improve their attitudes toward reading, and to decrease classroom discipline problems among the students in the targeted populations.

The writer concludes that this practicum will be applicable to English teachers with basic classes at both middle and high school levels as a viable method for increasing literal and inferential comprehension levels of their students.

The solution strategy discussed in this paper will first be introduced to the English teachers at the writer's school at an English Department meeting. The writer, as the department chairperson, works closely with the other English teachers and frequently holds meetings to give the English teachers within the school an opportunity to share successful strategies with their colleagues.

The next step in disseminating the information documented in this practicum will be to lead a workshop on teaching reading comprehension

skills in middle school basic English classes at the fall meeting of the local council of English teachers.

* A third option is to lead a workshop at the state convention of English teachers. This convention will be held in the writer's county in the fall of 1985.

A more general use of this plan is to involve the other academic teachers within the school in considering the techniques in the practicum that are both innovative and effective in structuring their basic classes. This would involve the teacher's stressing participation of the student in oral work, group work, and creative dramatics to increase comprehension in all the content areas. The writer would stress to the academic teachers that the basic student, to achieve success, must be actively involved in group dynamics. The traditional, isolated approach to skills development will not prove to be the most effective means of teaching these students.

The writer, at these workshops, will not only address skills development, but she will also emphasize the observed changes in attitude and behavior the students in the target group demonstrated. The writer will suggest that the reading program also offers potential for improving the climate of the classroom.

This plan for informing diverse groups of teachers of a new curricular strategy should generate the interest and enthusiasm necessary on the part of the participants of the workshops to inspire them to implement some adaptation of the strategy in their classrooms.

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• pp. 4-7, 14.

APPENDIX A
STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST, II RESULTS

Administered April 26, 1984

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Comprehension</u>	<u>Total Language</u>
1	4	3
2	3	3
3	2	2
4	4	4
5	3	2
6	3	4
7	Scores not available	
8	3	4
9	Scores not available	
10	3	3
11	Scores not available	
12	4	4
13	3	3
14	Scores not available	
15	4	3

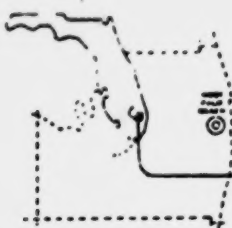
NOTE: Scores are stanine scores. The stanine scores range from one to nine. A stanine score of five is average for this test.

APPENDIX B

MIDDLE/JHS DIAGNOSTIC COMMUNICATIONS TEST, READING SKILLS PORTION

Administered September 20, 1984

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Number of Students Demonstrating Mastery</u>
A2 IDENTIFY MEANINGS OF WORDS PRESENTED IN CONTEXT YES	6
B8 IDENT MEANINGS OF WORDS W/PREFIXES & SUFFIXES YES	4
C12 DETERMINE THE MAIN IDEA STATED IN A PARAGRAPH YES	4
C13 ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT SENTENCES OR PARAGRAPHS YES	10
C14 IDENTIFY THE ORDER OF EVENTS IN A PARAGRAPH YES	7
C15 IDENTIFY CAUSE OR EFFECT STATED IN PARAGRAPH YES	7
C16 FOLLOW WRITTEN DIRECTIONS YES	5
D17 IDENTIFY THE MEANINGS OF WORDS IN CONTEXT YES	3
D19 IDENTIFY THE MAIN IDEA IMPLIED IN A PARAGRAPH YES	4
D20 IDENTIFY CAUSE OR EFFECT IMPLIED IN PARAGRAPH YES	5
D21 IDENTIFY APPROP CONCLUSION/GENERAL FOR A PARA YES	3
E22 DIST BETWEEN REAL & UNREAL EVENTS IN PARAGRAPH YES	0
E23 DIST BETWEEN FACTS & OPINIONS IN PARAGRAPH YES	0
F25 OBTAIN INFO FROM PICTURES, MAPS, OR SIGNS YES	8
F26 OBTAIN INFO FROM TABLES, GRAPHS, OR SCHEDULES YES	7
F27 OBTAIN INFO FROM INDEXES, DICT ENTRIES, ETC YES	3
F29 IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SOURCE TO OBTAIN INFO YES	4



COUNTY GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION TO GRADE NINE

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

3323 BELVEDERE ROAD
WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33402

TELEPHONE 984-3888

THOMAS J. MILLS
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS

January 15, 1985

BULLETIN #MJP-83-ASPO-PE

LOUIS J. FAS

SUSAN H. PEI

JOSEPH N. BELL

GAIL BJORK

ROBERT S. HOW

LYNDIA M. JONES

HUGH MacMILLAN

TO: All Middle/Junior High School Principals

FROM: J. Kenneth Schrimsher, Associate Superintendent
Planning and Operations

Contact Person	
Name:	Bernard Jones
Phone:	5436

SUBJECT: Certification of Eighth Grade Students on State Minimum Performance Standards

The State Student Assessment Test (SSAT) is designed to measure minimum performance skills which students should acquire in order to perform reading, writing, and mathematical tasks necessary in everyday life. The Palm Beach County Schools has made student mastery of all standards measured on the eighth grade SSAT a prerequisite for promotion to the ninth grade.

In the past, certification of eighth grade students who failed one or more of the state minimum performance standards was coordinated by area reading and mathematics consultants. Since these consultants no longer provide services to secondary schools, the Department of Program Evaluation has assumed responsibility for this function.

The certification procedures are listed below.

Certification Procedures for Students who Did Not Take the SSAT:

1. The principal (or designee) administers and scores the appropriate 1984-85 Palm Beach County Skills Assessment (PBCSA) test(s), and completes a test report form.
2. The following materials, which are available from Bernard Jones (ext. 5436), will be distributed to all middle/junior high schools on January 29, 1985.
 - a. PBCSA - Mathematics/Communications
 - b. Answer sheets
 - c. Scoring key, reflecting standard/skill codes and mastery criteria
 - d. Student report forms

APPENDIX D

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST, BROWN LEVEL
FORM A, TEST RESULTS - PRE-TEST - COMPREHENSION

Administered February 20, 1985

<u>Student</u>	<u>Grade Equivalent</u> <u>Score-literal</u>	<u>Grade Equivalent</u> <u>Score-inferential</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	4.4	4.9	4.6
2.	K	3.8	2.9
3.	3.9	3.5	3.8
4.	4.6	4.7	4.8
5.	1.9	K	1.9
6.	4.8	5.2	4.9
7.	5.9	4.7	5.3
8.	5.9	5.2	5.6
9.	4.8	5.2	4.9
10.	3.6	3.1	3.5
11.	3.9	3.5	3.8
12.	5.7	4.9	5.3
13.	4.4	4.1	4.2
14.	4.4	4.9	4.6
15.	3.9	4.9	4.4

APPENDIX E

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE/INTEREST INVENTORY FOR STUDENTS

1. What is your name?
2. What is your birthdate?
3. With whom do you live? Name the members of your family and their relationship to you.
4. List some places where you have lived.
5. How many people in your family work outside the home?
6. Have you taken a vacation? Where? (Mountains, North, West, outside the U.S., lake, other)
7. What do you do when you get home from school?
8. Do you get an allowance?
9. How do you earn money?
10. What chores do you do around the house?
11. Have you taken special lessons in art, music, drama, ballet, etc?
12. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations?
13. What is your favorite t.v. show, recording group, book, magazine, movie, sports team?
14. What is your favorite school subject? Why?
15. What languages do you speak? What language do people speak at your home?
16. What is your very favorite thing to do when you have free time?

LETTER TO READ REQUESTING PERMISSION TO REPRINT MATERIALS

8421 West Lake Drive
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
February 19, 1985

READ

Weekly Reader, Executive and Editorial Offices
245 Long Hill Road
Middletown, CT 06457

Dear Sirs:

I am working on an educational research project as part of the degree requirements of Nova University for a Master of Science. The topic of my report is "Improving Reading Comprehension of Basic Students by Orally Reading High Level Material." The materials I am using to implement this project are selected plays in various issues of Read magazine.

I would like permission to include sample tests from the magazine and discussion questions from the teacher's guide to verify both the content and the quality of reading comprehension material in your excellent publication.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Blacharski

Carol S. Blacharski

APPENDIX G

LETTER FROM READ REQUESTING MORE INFORMATION**READ READ READ READ READ**

245 Long Hill Road, Middletown, CT 06457 (203) 347-7251

February 28, 1985

Carol S. Blacharski
8421 West Lake Drive
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

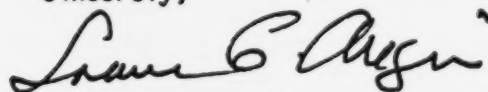
Dear Ms. Blacharski:

Thank you for your letter requesting permission to reprint material
from Read magazine.

Before I can grant you permission to do so, I must have more detailed
information about the material you are interested in. Please send me
a list of the issue numbers, dates, and pages from the issues that
you wish to use.

Thank you for your interest in Read.

Sincerely,



Louise C. Augeri
Senior Editorial Coordinator
READ MAGAZINE

LCA:hs

SECOND LETTER TO READ GIVING DETAILS

8421 West Lake Drive
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
March 2, 1985

Louise C. Augeri
Senior Editorial Coordinator
Read Magazine
245 Long Hill Road
Middletown, CT 06457

Dear Ms. Augeri:

Thank you for your prompt response to my letter requesting permission to reprint material from Read magazine in the appendix of an educational research paper that I'm preparing as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Science degree from Nova University. The material I wish to include, if you permit, will be properly foot-noted. Full bibliographical information will also be included in the paper.

I wish to reprint the following:

- I. Vol. 32. No. 18, May 20, 1983
 - A. Test- Sequence of Events-pp.20-21
 - B. Teacher's Edition- related to "I Am the Cheese"-pp. 1-2
- II. Vol. 34. No. 13, March 1, 1985
 - A. Test-Main Idea-p.29
 - B. Teacher's Edition- related to "One Too Many"-pp.1-2
- III. Vol. 33 No. 5, Nov.4, 1983
 - A. Test-Main Ideas and Supporting Details-p.19
 - B. Teacher's Edition-related to "The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid" pp. 1-2
- IV. Vol. 31. No. 11, Feb. 3. 1982
 - A. Test- "The Ugly Little Boy"- Theme and Conflict and Reading Comprehension
 - B. p. 15
- V. Vol. 31. No. 15, March 13, 1982
 - A. "Words With Punch"-Reading comprehension-p.14
 - B. "I'll Just Die"-Making Inferences and Main Idea-p.15
- VI. Vol. 32. No. 5 Nov.5, 1982-p.15
- VII. Vol. 33. No. 9, Jan.6, 1984-Teacher's Edition- related to "Harrison Bergeron"-p.2
- VIII. Vol. 33. No. 10, Jan. 20, 1984- Teacher's Edition- related to "Just A Little Joke"- p. 2

SECOND LETTER TO READ GIVING DETAILS, CONT.

I wish to reprint this information in the appendix of my paper to provide documentation of the discussion and testing materials I'm using to try to improve the reading comprehension levels of my basic students by reading plays from Read.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Blacharski

Carol S. Blacharski

FINAL LETTER FROM READ GRANTING PERMISSION TO REPRINT

245 Long Hill Road, Middletown, CT 06457 (203) 347-7251

March 7, 1985

Carol S. Blacharski
8421 West Lake Drive
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Dear Ms. Blacharski:

Thank you for your prompt reply with the information I requested
pertaining to your reprinting material from Read.

We will be happy to grant you permission to reprint the items
listed. This material must be for classroom use only and is not to
be sold. Also, please credit Read magazine and Weekly Reader
Publications.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Louise C. Augeri
Senior Editorial Coordinator
READ MAGAZINE

LCA:hs

APPENDIX J
LEVELS OF COMPREHENSION

Level 1

Literal

Recall of:

facts (details)

sequence

main idea

directions

organization

cause-and effect

comparison

contrast

character traits

Recognition of:

facts

sequence

main idea

directions

organization

cause-and-effect

comparison

contrast

character traits

Level 2

Interpretive

Inferring:

sequence

main idea

cause-and-effect

comparison

contrast

purpose

details

character traits

drawing conclusions

generalizing

deriving meaning from figurative

language

speculating

predicting

anticipating

summarizing

Lanier, R.J. and Davis, A.P. (1972).

APPENDIX K

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "ONE TOO MANY" FROM READ MAGAZINE

TEACHER'S EDITION

One Too Many

PAGE 18

With the unexpected twist at the end, this teleplay takes on added power and should lend itself to a fruitful classroom discussion. It addresses not only the growing problem of teenage alcoholism but also the mistaken belief that unless a person is "falling down drunk," he or she is OK to drive.

Discussion Questions

- On their first date, why does Jane drink with Eric? Why is Eric so eager to have Jane continue to drink with him?
- Is sitting under the stars drinking champagne a romantic idea? Look through magazines for ads for alcohol. Is drinking often associated in the ads with good times and romance? Do you think these ads influence teenagers to drink?
- Do you think that Eric really cared for Jane, or do you think that he was just looking for a drinking partner?
- When you compare Eric and Jane's relationship with Beth and Tim's, do you see any differences? Did Eric and Jane have more fun with each other because they were drinking?
- Several times Eric promises his friends that he will not drink. Each time he breaks his promise. Why? If someone made a promise to you and then continued to break it, how would you feel? Was Beth right to feel angry with and mistrustful of Eric?
- If Eric's family and friends had stepped in sooner to help him, might Beth's accidental death have been avoided? How effective are school courses that warn against drunken driving? How could they be made more effective? Can you think of other ways to warn students?
- Do you think that Jane should be treated as a criminal? In general, do you think that drunken drivers should be treated as criminals?
- Each year the number of teenage alcoholics increases. Can you think of any reasons this may be? Why would a young man like Eric, who appears to have everything going for him, turn to alcohol? Are any clues given in the play?

APPENDIX L

TEST ON "ONE TOO MANY"

True or False questions- Supporting Details

1. Jane drinks because she likes Eric.
2. Beth and Tim drink with Jane and Eric.
3. Eric feels like he is under a lot of pressure.
4. The play's message is that it's o.k. to drink and drive.
5. Tim runs over Beth.
6. Jane is arrested at the end of the play.
7. Jane's mom thinks it is o.k. if she drinks.
8. All of these people are old enough to drink safely.

Note: The students answered two additional questions from Read text
(See Appendix M for two additional questions for a total of ten questions).

APPENDIX M

READ TEST ON "ONE TOO MANY"

5. When the 15 years are up, what is the banker's financial status?
6. In the note he writes, what is the lawyer's basic attitude toward human beings?
7. What are the banker's feelings after he reads the note?
8. What does the last paragraph of the story reveal to you about the banker's character?
9. Judging from this story, would you say that Chekhov is optimistic, pessimistic, or realistic about human nature? (Be sure to write your answer as a sentence.)

One Too Many pp. 18-27

Main idea. When the author wrote this story, he had a certain idea he was trying to get across. Which of the following statements best expresses that main idea?

- ☐ 1. Problem drinkers are not the only ones who are dangerous when they drive. Anyone who drinks and drives is a threat.
- ☐ 2. Often teenagers drink hoping to be popular.
- ☐ 3. There are times in life when a person who is guilty of a crime goes free without any punishment.
- ☐ 4. Family and friends of a problem drinker should not be afraid to take away his/her car keys.



Irony. Irony is a literary device that writers sometimes use to add a twist to a play or short story. Irony is an unexpected turn of events—a reversal of what the reader would expect to happen.

Below are several events from the play. Show your understanding of irony by checking the one event that is ironic.

- ☐ 1. Jane drinks champagne with Eric even though she doesn't like the taste of it.
- ☐ 2. Eric continues to drink even after he has promised everyone he is going to quit.
- ☐ 3. It is Jane, not Eric, who is driving the car that kills Beth.
- ☐ 4. Eric walks away from the police station, having been charged with no crime.

* Reprinted with permission of Read magazine, Weekly Reader Publications, March 1, 1985, p.29.

APPENDIX N

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON "THE OUTSIDERS"

1. Why is the play titled "The Outsiders"?
2. What two groups are mentioned in the play? How are their lives different?
3. Describe Ponyboy's family:
 Darrel
 Sodapop
 Ponyboy
4. Who is in charge of the family?
5. Why do Darrel and Ponyboy quarrel so frequently?
6. Why do the Greasers and the Socs fight?
7. What does Randy do to Ponyboy that causes him to black out?
8. What does Johnny do to Bob because of it?
9. What do Ponyboy and Johnny decide to do because of Johnny's action?
10. Who helps them?
11. Where do they hide out?
12. How do Ponyboy and Johnny become heroes?
13. What happens to Johnny when he tries to save the children?
14. Who wins the rumble?
15. What does Darrel want for Ponyboy?
16. How does Cherry help Ponyboy at the trial?
17. Do you think Ponyboy will make it into college?
18. What are the social groups at school? Compare and contrast clothing styles, habits, attitudes toward school, family backgrounds, and wealth.
19. Can you usually tell to what social group someone belongs?
20. Do the social groups at our school fight?

APPENDIX O

TEST ON "THE OUTSIDERS"**The Outsiders** pp. 18-29

Main idea. Select the best main idea choice from those listed below.

- ___ 1. When two groups from different social backgrounds are forced to mingle, violence usually erupts, especially if one group is superior to the other in intelligence and material wealth.
- ___ 2. People are still people, with their own feelings and sensitivities, in spite of labels that may be applied to them.
- ___ 3. People referred to as "outsiders" belong to a weird fringe of American society that lacks the proper social graces and should not be trusted.

Supporting details. A good writer uses many details to support the main idea. Put a check mark beside the speeches below that support the main idea choice you selected.

- ___ 1. Cherry: You read a lot, don't you, Ponyboy? I'll bet you watch sunsets too.
- ___ 2. Johnny: Man, that Mustang was a tuff car!
- ___ 3. Ponyboy: You know what a Soc is? White trash with Mustangs.
- ___ 4. Johnny: It seems like there's gotta be a someplace without Greasers or Socs, with just people. Plain ordinary people.
- ___ 5. Dallas: We've really been havin' a war since you killed that kid. All over the town, it's Soc against Greaser.
- ___ 6. Cherry: Randy's not going to show at the rumble. He's not scared—just sick of fighting.
- ___ 7. Sodapop (to Darrel): Stop fighting! If we don't have each other, we don't have anything.
- ___ 8. Ponyboy: Hey, look at that gorgeous sunset. Can you see it real good from the Southside? Cherry: Real good. Ponyboy: You can see it real good from the Northside, too.

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APPENDIX P
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF
THE FOURTH KIND"

1. What is Elbbug Mug?
2. What is your first clue?
3. Look again at the words "Elbbug Mug". What do these words really say?
4. Is this play based on fact?
5. What is the author's purpose in writing this play?
6. Who are Walter Cramtight, Coward Go-Yell, Gym McPlay?
What is the "Snide World of Sports"?
7. How does Kid Alien resemble all kids on a long trip? Name three things he does. Do you drive your parents crazy like this?
8. What is the author saying about Earth's environment?
9. What does Mom Alien say about the habits of Earth's population?
10. What does the author tell us about commercials?
11. Who saves Earth? How?

APPENDIX Q

DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY FOR "I AM THE CHEESE"

WHO AM I?

PAGE 4

Just as Adam Farmer in *I Am the Cheese* searches for himself, your students are entering a soul-searching phase of their lives—adolescence. We hope this article and the questions below will stimulate positive thinking among your students concerning the changes and decisions that lie ahead.

Self-image activities

Many psychologists and teachers stress the importance of helping young people think positively about themselves. These activities would further that goal.

- Have students trace each other's silhouettes on large poster boards. Then, using phrases clipped from magazines and newspapers, each student can surround his silhouette with what he considers his best qualities.

- Ask students to divide a sheet of paper into two columns. On the left side, they list their weaknesses. On the right, they rephrase each weakness into a positive statement. Example: *Nothing about me is pretty* in the left column becomes *I have several attractive features; for instance, my . . .* in the column on the right.

I AM THE CHEESE

PAGE 9

Since Robert Cormier's *I Am the Cheese* was published in 1977, it has become one of the modern classics for young readers. In fact, it was recommended as a "book that works with kids" in the March 1983 *English Journal*. (See p. 93.) Now, with the release of the film version, the book should attract an even wider audience.

Of course, one of the book's main appeals is its mystery and suspense. *What is going on here?* the reader has to ask himself as the novel moves to its final revelations. The movie is very faithful to the book—Robert Cormier worked closely with the moviemakers and even appears in the film—and therefore requires the same kind of unraveling process. There are many time changes and flashbacks, and the ability to interpret clues and make inferences becomes very important.

The following synopsis should help you in handling the play with your class:

Synopsis

A family named Delmonte lives in Blount, N.Y. The father, a reporter, discovers corruption linked to the state (and presumably federal) government. Authorities (Mr. Gray) stage a bombing to make it appear that the bad guys are striking back. Using the explosion as a pretext, Mr. Gray moves the family to a new life in Northfield, Mass., under a witness protection program.

The family is given the name of Farmer and a fake background showing they came from Rawlings, Pa. In addition, Mr. Gray creates a fake death for the Delmontes (in a supposed "crash on interstate"), complete with fake graves and headstones. Some years later, Mr. Gray learns that the father has still more damaging information that he's writing up—and decides that the family must have an "accident."

The father and mother are killed, but the son (Adam Farmer/Paul Delmonte/Skipper) lives. Witnessing his parents' death drives Adam into psychic shock. He is taken to an institution in Vermont where he is ^{three} years, under drugs, while

a Dr. Brint tries to learn how much he knows and whether he has given any damaging information to Mr. Hertz, a Northfield newspaper editor for whom Adam has done part-time work.

Adam is to be "terminated" once authorities think it is safe to do so. But he escapes on his bicycle as the play ends.

The play covers several time sequences at once:

- Adam's bike ride, which is actually a troubled fantasy Adam has while riding his bike around the grounds of the institution. In his fantasy, Adam sets out to find his father, encounters people along the way who are actually at the institution, and keeps trying to call his old girl friend, Amy Hertz, in Northfield.

- Scenes from Adam's life as an infant and child, in which clues to the mysteries of the play are given.

- Scenes from the present, in which Dr. Brint questions Adam to see how much of the past Adam remembers.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Since inference and fitting the parts of the puzzle together are so important, we think the DRTA approach might be helpful. First, ask students to guess about the meaning of the title, which in itself has an air of mystery. Then, as you reach each of the letters in the text, ask the corresponding questions that follow.

However, a word of caution: Since the author intended to build mystery and suspense, please use the questions to get students thinking—but not to provide all the answers prematurely.

A—What sort of person does Adam seem to be? Why do you think he is

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May 20, 1982, p1.

APPENDIX Q₁

DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY FOR "I AM THE CHEESE," CONT.

setting out on a bike ride? What might the package contain? What sort of person is Mr. Harvester?

B—When was this cap and coat mentioned before? Why might Adam be wearing his father's clothes? Why is Dr. Brint so interested in Adam's past?

C—What are the other verses in this nursery rhyme? (*Lead students to final verse: "The cheese stands alone, the cheese stands alone..."*) Does this phrase remind you of anything? (*the title*) What might the connection between song and title be? Who is the cheese? (*It will become clear at the end that Adam is the cheese, who stands alone as he tries to save himself.*)

D—Any guesses about why there's no response? Who might Amy be?

E—Why does Adam react to being called "mysterious"? How does his family compare with Amy's? Any guesses about what Adam's family has done?

F—How does Adam respond to Mr. Montgomery's questions? Is he being honest? Does this suggest anything about Adam's family?

G—Why do you think Adam's mother says, "It's not safe"? What are Adam's parents worrying about?

H—Does anything about these birth certificates strike you as odd? (*All are signed by the same clerk. Since father, mother, and son would have been born many years apart, it is most unlikely that the same clerk would have been in office so long.*)

I—What does the other set of certificates indicate? What dates are given on the Adam Farmer and Paul Delmonte certificates? What does this suggest?

J—Why might Mr. Gray be taping his conversations with Mr. Farmer?

K—What sort of people are Whipper and his friends? Any guesses about what's in Adam's package?

L—Why is Mr. Farmer so upset about Gray's tapes? (*Possibly Mr. Farmer has told Gray about future plans to give more testimony about the people whom Gray seems to be protecting; perhaps Mr. Farmer expressed dissatisfaction with having to live such a secretive life.*)

M—Why did Gray intervene? What interests was he protecting? Why might he have planted the bomb?

N—What might Mr. Farmer be writing? Would Mr. Gray approve?

O—Who might the brown delivery truck belong to?

P—Why is Dr. Brint using the name Paul?

Q—Were the Farmers killed "by accident"? Where did Mr. Gray come from? Do you think he had something to do with the deaths? What happens to Adam as a result of seeing both parents killed?

R—Where have we seen a chain-link and barbed wire fence before? Where has the lame Old Man appeared? How did Whipper, Jed, and Corn seem earlier? What sort of person was the Store Owner? the Fat Man? Did those people exist as Adam saw them earlier? Why might Adam have made them all seem so hostile? (*He was projecting his own paranoia and hostilities on them.*)

S—When Dr. Brint refers to Adam's bike ride, what does he mean?

T—Why has Adam carried Pokey around all this time? (*He needed the security of his childhood stuffed animal, disguised in paper so no one would know. Calling it a present for his father allowed Adam to block out the truth that his father was no longer alive.*)

U—Who is Dr. Brint? Who is his boss? Why does he ask Adam so many questions? What does Mr. Gray want to know? (*how much Adam knows, what Adam's told the Hertzes. Remember, Mr. Hertz is a newspaper editor.*) What does termination procedures mean? Why might Gray want Adam dead?

V—Where did this phrase occur before? Does this indicate anything about the parts of the script labeled *The Bike Ride*? (*Encourage students to discover that all scenes labeled Bike Ride were fantasy events—products of Adam's drugged and dazed mental state, thoughts he had as he circled the fence surrounding the institution. In reality, he has never left the institution since his parents died.*)

W—Where has this truck appeared? What should Adam conclude? (*that the people responsible for his*

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May 20, 1982, pp.2-3

APPENDIX Q₂DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY FOR "I AM THE CHEESE", CONT.

parents' death and those running the institution are the same)

X—Who was keeping Adam in the institution? Why? *(presumably, the Government, because Adam might know something about his father's testimony and might be able to identify those guilty of killing his parents.)* Who might Mr. Farmer have been testifying against? *(high government officials)* Why did Adam imagine his bike was stolen? *(In Adam's fearful state, the bike represents a ticket to freedom.)* Why did Adam find the door to the police station "imposing"? *(Adam couldn't trust police—too akin to Government officials.)* Why did Adam long to speak to Amy? *(his only friend)* Why didn't she answer? *(Calls were imaginary.)* Why did Dr. Brint ask all the questions? *(doing Gray's bidding—must find out what Adam knows)*

Additional information

There is a federal witness relocation program that protects important witnesses by giving them completely new identities. As "60 Minutes" has shown in several segments, there have been problems.

In one case, the new identities were revealed because parents and children had been given consecutive Social Security numbers.

In another case, a divorced man wanted to reestablish contact with his former wife and their children. However, the ex-wife had married a man who was part of the witness protection program. The first man, trying to find his children, hit a blank wall made worse by Government deception. He finally learned what had happened, but only after great effort.

Nevertheless, the witness relocation program has had many successes, and Robert Cormier does not claim that events like those in his story have ever happened.

Discussion questions

- What is your reaction to Mr. Gray and the others who help him? Can anything be said in their favor?
- Will Adam survive on the outside? What things are in his favor? What things work against him?

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May 20, 1982, pp2-3.

APPENDIX R

READ TEST ON "I AM THE CHEESE"

I Am The Cheese pp. 8-17

Sequence of events. The author has written this play as a mystery and has deliberately mixed in a number of different time sequences. Figuring out what events happen when is an important part of understanding the story.

Following are events we have selected from the plot. We'd like you to put them in order, numbering them from 1 to 6. But *remember*—you must base your numbering on when each event happened in actual time, not when it

happened in the play.

a. Authorities decide that Adam's father might reveal further information and kill him and his wife in an accident."

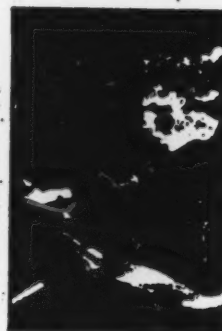
b. A boy named Paul Delmonte is born in Blount, N.Y.

c. Adam is scheduled to be killed once authorities feel it is safe—but escapes from the institution on his bicycle.

d. Paul's father, a reporter, writes some articles that send influential people to jail and may threaten federal and state authorities.

e. Seeing his parents killed, Adam goes into psychic shock and is taken to an institution where Dr. Brint tries to find out how much Adam knows.

f. After a bomb goes off, a government official (Mr. Gray) arranges for the Delmontes to move to Massachusetts and gives them a new identity: the Farmers. Paul, still an infant, becomes Adam Farmer.



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May 20, 1982, pp.20-21.

APPENDIX S

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "THE MONKEY'S PAW"

1. What is the power of the paw?
2. Why is it dangerous to use the power of the paw?
3. What happened when Mr. White wished for 500 pounds?
4. Do you think the paw caused Herbert's death?
5. What was the second wish made on the paw?
6. What was the effect of the second wish?
7. What do you think Herbert looked like as he banged on the door?
8. What was the final wish on the paw? Was it granted?
9. Was Mr. White right to make the third wish?
10. How do you think Mrs. White will react? Will she blame her husband for wishing Herbert away?
11. What is the setting of the story? Is the setting important for establishing the mood of the story?
12. Which details of the setting add to the suspense of the action?

APPENDIX T

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "THE UGLY LITTLE BOY"

1. Is this story factual?
2. What do you call this type of literature?
3. What is the main idea/theory which forms the basis for this story?
4. Why does Dr. Hoskins bring things/people into the future?
5. When in the past did Timmie live?
6. Does Dr. Hoskins care about Timmie's feelings? Give three examples.
7. Why is Miss Fellows originally selected to be Timmie's nurse?
8. How does Timmie behave at first? Give five examples.
9. About how old is Timmie?
10. What is the first thing Timmie does that makes Miss Fellows see him as a "real" little boy?
11. Name five things Timmie learns to do.
12. Why does Dr. Hoskins decide to send Timmie back?
13. Why does Miss Fellows object?
14. What does Timmie say that makes Miss Fellows choose to do what she what she does?
15. Name two current conflicts between science and humanity.

APPENDIX U

TEST ON "THE UGLY LITTLE BOY"

The Ugly Little Boy pp. 16-23

Theme and Conflict. The main theme of this story, its basic subject matter, is the conflict between two views of humanity. Nurse Fellowes represents one view, and Dr. Hoskins represents the other. Among the choices below, put an F in front of the view that best represents Nurse Fellowes and an H in front of the view that best represents Dr. Hoskins.

- ___ 1. The main purpose of scientific discovery is to help all mankind.
- ___ 2. Human needs and feelings are the most important thing of all and should get top consideration.
- ___ 3. Scientific work and discoveries are the most important thing of all and should get top consideration.
- ___ 4. It is dangerous to do any kind of scientific work; therefore, any type of scientific experiment should be rigidly controlled.

Reading comprehension. These questions will test your understanding of events in the story. Write your answers on separate paper.

- 1. Why is Dr. Hoskins so concerned about Timmie leaving the special room and breaking stasis?
- 2. What almost happens to Professor Adamewaki when she enters a stasis chamber to get back a rock from 2 million years ago?
- 3. What are two things Timmie does that show he has human feelings?



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Feb. 3, 1982, p.15.

APPENDIX V

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "I'LL JUST DIE"

1. What is the setting of the play?
2. Why is Cindy's father asked to speak to the school in an assembly?
3. How does Cindy feel about it?
4. What does Cindy criticize about her dad?
5. How does Cindy try to prepare her father for the speech?
6. How does the speech go? Do the kids like Mr. Wood?
7. Was Cindy thinking about her dad's feelings?
8. How did Cindy's attitude change after the speech?
9. Have you ever tried to influence your parents' choices of clothes or hair styles?
10. Have you worried that your parents will embarrass you in front of your friends?

APPENDIX W

TEST ON "I'LL JUST DIE"

'I'll Just Die' pp. 22-27

Making inferences. An inference, as you may remember, is a suggestion that may be picked up from a story, but is not openly stated. Read the statements below, checking only those that are valid inferences.

- ___ 1. Cindy is insecure about her popularity at school.
- ___ 2. Cindy does love her father, but is somewhat ashamed of him.
- ___ 3. Before the assembly, Cindy really doesn't regard her father as a very interesting person.
- ___ 4. Cindy's father is a good-natured man.
- ___ 5. After Mr. Wood's successful performance, Cindy is so proud that she'll probably never try to change him again.
- ___ 6. In the end, Cindy's father is admired because he was himself—itchy nose, and all.



Main idea. Select the one statement below that best expresses the author's message.

- ___ 1. Most parents need a bit of polishing before they're ready to appear in public.
- ___ 2. Parents, like most people, give a better presentation when they are allowed to be themselves.
- ___ 3. Before going onstage, most parents would do well to rehearse their acts thoroughly.

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March 13, 1982, p. 15.

APPENDIX X

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "HARRISON BERGERON"

HARRISON BERGERON

PAGE 22

Kurt Vonnegut, like George Orwell, is a satirist. Like Orwell, he comments on life in the present by putting certain trends in the future and carrying them to extremes. However, most of Vonnegut's writings have a little more humor and a little less bleakness than Orwell's.

Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," a short story that we adapted into a play, has humorous overtones. Although the climax is anything but upbeat, the depiction of a U.S. in which everyone must be equal has its lighter moments. And yet the point is powerfully made.

Discussion Questions

- How does the tone of "Harrison Bergeron" compare to the tone of "Room 101"? Which is bleaker and more serious? Which shows flashes of humor? Which is closer to the spirit of *Mad Magazine*? Is satire any less pointed because it contains humor?
- What is Kurt Vonnegut satirizing in this play? (the basic idea that everyone can be equal in all ways)
- Let's assume that you have the power to make sure that everyone is born equal. There won't be a need for weights, earplugs, masks, or other crude handicaps, because everyone will be exactly equal from birth. Would you use your power? Would a world in which everyone was exactly equal be better than the one we have now? Just how far can equality be carried?
- From what you've seen of Harrison Bergeron, would you like to live in a

country of which he is the leader? What kind of ruler might he be?

- The TV set is an important part of the symbolism of *Harrison Bergeron*. What things does the TV set symbolize? (Since George and Hazel just sit and look at it all day, it symbolizes the creative and intellectual mediocrity of their world. By constantly breaking down and by carrying shows in which something constantly goes wrong, the TV set also symbolizes the general shoddiness of life in the all-equal U.S.)

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APPENDIX Y

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "THE CELEBRITY AND
THE ARCADE KID"

CELEBRITY, ARCADE KID

PAGE 20

As you've probably noticed, *The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid* is a modern version of Mark Twain's novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*. The two main characters in the teleplay, Kyle and Johnnie, switch identities and get a look at how "the other

half lives." This new perspective, in turn, gives them a fresh look at their own lives.

We think the teleplay will help students appreciate that everyone has his or her own pleasures and problems. It might also encourage students to recognize more fully the things in their own lives that give them pleasure and discourage them from dwelling on their problems.

Discussion Questions

- Describe Kyle Rhodes's attitude toward ordinary people at the beginning of the teleplay. Give two specific examples that support your description. (Kyle seems to look down on ordinary people. For example, he refuses to give an autograph to a fan, and he refers to the small city where he is working as "Hicksville.")
- Describe Johnnie Grant's attitude toward rich, famous people at the beginning of the teleplay. Give two specific examples that support your description. (Johnnie appears to admire rich, famous people. His friends, for example, say that he is forever pretending that he's Kyle Rhodes; and, when he's actually mistaken for Kyle Rhodes, he's delighted.)
- Do you think Johnnie does well at Kyle's press conference? Explain your answer. What does Johnnie's performance at the press conference bring out about his personality? (It brings out his simplicity and honesty.)
- How does Kyle react to Johnnie's family? What does this reveal about Kyle? (It reveals that he values the warmth and love the family shares.)
- How has Kyle changed by the end of the teleplay? Support your answer with specific examples. (Kyle has lost some of his conceit. He takes pleasure in giving an autograph, for example.)
- How has Johnnie changed at the end? Support your answer with specific examples. (He sees that riches and fame don't solve all of a person's problems. He says, for example, that he would rather be himself than Kyle Rhodes.)

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Nov. 4, 1983, pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX Z

TEST ON "THE CELEBRITY AND THE ARCADE KID"

The Celebrity and Arcade Kid pp. 20-29

Supporting details. The supporting details in a literary work develop the main ideas. If you miss these important details, you may misunderstand what you're reading. Not all details help develop a main idea, however, and it's up to you to tell which don't and which do.

Let's say that one of the main ideas of a play is that running away from home doesn't solve all problems. The main character, Frank, runs away from home and gets down to his last 2 dollars. He tries to borrow money from a man with red hair. Instead of helping Frank, the man cons him out of the 2 dollars.

Frank's getting cheated is an important detail because it's a problem he faces in running away. The man's red hair is *not* an important detail, however, because it does not support or develop the main idea.

Now it's your turn. Following are two main ideas from the play. Below each main idea is a list of details. Some support the main ideas, and some don't. Indicate only the ones that *do* by putting a check mark beside them.

1. Main Idea: *Riches and fame don't guarantee a problem-free life.*

_____ a. Star Kyle Rhodes has to keep up with his schoolwork.

_____ b. Aunt Helen is Kyle's legal guardian while he works away from home.

_____ c. Kyle rides in a chauffeur-driven limousine.

_____ d. Kyle's chauffeur says that actors are nuts.

_____ e. Kyle isn't allowed to run his own life.

2. Main Idea: *It's possible to have a little money and a lot of happiness.*

_____ a. Johnnie Grant has close friends.

_____ b. Johnnie's friends think he talks too much about looking like Hollywood star Kyle Rhodes.

_____ c. Johnnie's father is big.

_____ d. Johnnie's father owns a gas station where he and Johnnie work hard to make a living.

_____ e. Johnnie is proud that he's a good mechanic.



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Nov. 4, 1983, p19.

APPENDIX AA

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "JUST A LITTLE JOKE"**JUST A LITTLE JOKE****PAGE 22**

Barbara Bays, author of this play, is a teacher who lives in West Virginia. Her purpose in writing the play was to portray a teacher who cares for students (thereby projecting a positive image) and to provide a lesson in sensitivity. We hope that your students will enjoy the play and that they will pick up its underlying messages.

Discussion Questions

- Do you think this play is realistic in its characterizations? Are there people like Lisa and Debra? Is Mr. Bay too good to be true?
- Do you think you would be able to forgive Lisa and Debra as Mr. Bay did? Was it right for him to do so? What is accomplished when one person forgives another?
- Does the play tell you anything about Debra and Lisa that might account for the way they behave? (Both girls have moved around a lot and haven't had a chance to establish roots in any one place. In addition, the two girls are under pressure: They will have to be finding jobs in the near future. Thus they feel they have some reason to be suspicious of others and to have a somewhat bitter attitude toward people in authority.)
- At the end of the play, the girls appear to have had a change in heart. Do you think the change will last?

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Jan. 20, 1984, p.2.

APPENDIX BB
RECORD OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENT'S ABSENCES OR SUSPENSIONS DURING
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

Student	Days Absent	Days Suspended
1	9 (withdrawn from school at end of fourth week)	
2	4	4
3	0	23
4	4	0
5	0	16
6	12	5
7	2	0
8	0	7
9	8	0
10	4	0
11	(withdrawn from school at end of fifth week)	
12	5	0
13	0	0
14	5	0
15	3	0

APPENDIX CC

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST, BROWN LEVEL, FORM B, TEST RESULTSPOSTTEST-COMPREHENSION

Administered May 10, 1985

<u>Student</u>	<u>Grade Equivalent Score-literal</u>	<u>Grade Equivalent Score-inferential</u>	<u>Average Total</u>
1.	Withdrawn		
2.	3.8	5.1	4.6
3.	4.4	4.1	4.2
4.	5.3	5.5	5.4
5.	3.8	3.1	3.7
6.	5.6	5.6	5.6
7.	6.8	5.6	6.1
8.	6.4	5.8	6.2
9.	7.6	6.1	7.0
10.	4.4	4.1	4.3
11.	Withdrawn		
12.	7.6	6.1	7.4
13.	5.3	5.8	5.4
14.	4.4	5.3	4.9
15.	4.7	5.3	5.0

APPENDIX DD₁TEST RESULTS ON SPECIFIC LITERAL AND INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION SKILLSTESTS BASED ON SPECIFIC PLAYS

	<u>Test 1</u>	<u>Test 2</u>
Play:	"One Too Many"	"The Outsiders"
Skills:	Supporting Details	Main Idea
	Main Idea	Supporting Details
	Irony	

Student:

1.	100	100
2	70	80
3	suspended	suspended
4.	70	70
5	suspended	100
6	suspended	80
7.	90	100
8.	70	70
9.	100	100
10.	90	100
11.	100	100
12.	100	100
13.	100	90
14.	100	80
15.	100	100

APPENDIX DD₂TEST RESULTS ON SPECIFIC LITERAL AND INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION SKILLSTESTS BASED ON SPECIFIC PLAYS

	<u>Test 3</u>	<u>Test 4</u>
Play:	" I Am the Cheese"	"The Ugly Little Boy"
Skills:	Sequence of Events	Theme
		Conflict
		<u>Reading Comprehension</u>
Student		
1	100	100
2.	50	100
3.	suspended	80
4.	70	100
5.	60	70
6.	absent	100
7.	80	absent
8.	70	absent
9.	100	100
10.	70	90
11.	70	70
12.	90	100
13.	60	70
14.	70	100

APPENDIX DD.
3TEST RESULTS ON SPECIFIC LITERAL AND INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION SKILLSTESTS BASED ON SPECIFIC PLAYS

	<u>Test 5</u>	<u>Test 6</u>
Play:	"I'll Just Die"	"The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid"
Skills:	Making Inferences Main Idea	Supporting Details Main Idea

Student:

1.	Withdrawn from school	Withdrawn from school
2.	80	80
3.	70	suspended
4.	90	70
5.	suspended	suspended
6.	absent	absent
7.	90	90
8.	70	suspended
9.	absent	absent
10.	80	70
11.	withdrawn from school	withdrawn from school
12.	100	100
13.	80	70
14.	70	70
15.	70	80

APPENDIX EE

TESTED IMPROVEMENT IN READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS BASED ON A COMPARISON
BETWEEN PRETEST AND POSTTEST SCORES ON
 THE STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST, FORMS A AND B

<u>Student</u>	<u>Amount of Increase</u> <u>Literal</u>	<u>Amount of Increase</u> <u>Inferential</u>
1. Withdrawn		
2.	3.8	1.3
3.	.5	.6
4.	.6	.7
5.	2.8	3.1
6.	.7	.4
7.	.8	.8
8.	.4	.6
9.	3.7	.9
10.	.7	.9
11. Withdrawn		
12.	1.8	1.2
13	.8	1.7
14.	0	.4
15.	.7	.3

*Note: Results reported in years and months